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*The undersigned will be glad to receive for Second  
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*A. D. WELD FRENCH,  
P. O. Box 1622. Boston,  
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# JOHN FRENCH,

OF

BRAINTREE, MASSACHUSETTS.

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## NOTES ON THE FRENCHES

IN CONNECTION WITH

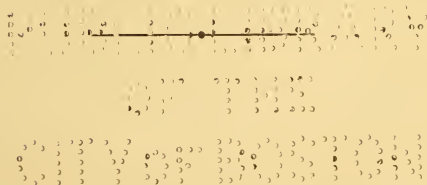
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# JOHN FRENCH,

OF BRAINTREE, MASSACHUSETTS.

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IR BERNARD BURKE states "that the name of French was originally De Fraxinus, or De Freigne, and was established in England at the Conquest."

"Fraxinus" was applied to the ash-tree as well as the spear, and the French word "Frene" or "Freigne" had the same significance.

This ash-tree occupied a high position in Greek as well as Northern mythology, and tradition hands down to the Norman that Adam was created out of this very wonderful tree. Besides these legendary associations, it was noted for its beauty: "it has been called the Venus of the Forest." "And Virgil makes the character of this tree particularly beautiful when he says, —

" 'Fraxinus in sylva pulcherrima,' "

Besides, it was valuable for building purposes, and, owing to its strength and lightness, furnished the handle for the invaluable spear.

Gilpin says: "To the ashen spear the heroes of antiquity were indebted for half their prowess." So the knights of old had reasons for encouraging the growth of this useful and beautiful tree.

In "Doomesday Book" there is an account of a celebrated "Fraxinetum," — a grove of ash-trees, a furlong both in length and breadth, at Longeport, in Northamptonshire.

In Normandy, it is supposed that surnames originated in the tenth century. They were conferred or adopted for various reasons, — were selected from the names of locations, qualities of mind and body, occupations, incidents, peculiarities; from the animal, mineral, and vegetable worlds. Among the Normans, names associated with location, with warfare and the chase, were popular; and from one of these sources the name of De Fraxinus, De Freigne, or De Frene, was derived. There are but two interpretations of the meaning, — viz., "Of the spear," which implied the ashen spear; and "Of the ash-tree." The latter indicates the name of a location or estate; while the former implies the occupation of war, as well as the warrior's amusement, the sports of the field.

The following list, compiled from public records, shows some changes of the name from the Norman-French until they become well anglicized: —



Frane	Freynsce	Frensche
Frene	Freynsh	Frenshe
Frein	Freynssh	French
Freyne	Freynsshe	Frense
Freyns	Frainche	Ffrench
Freignee	Freinche	French
Ffreygne		

In England, as late as 1332, appears the name of Fulconi de Fraxineto. In the year 1275, Gilbert le Freynsce and Simon le Frensch; a few years later, Simon le Frensh. In 1335 appears the name of Adam French of Berwick; and in Scotland, as late as the early part of the 17th century, the name is written, in documents, Frainche, Frensch, Frenshe, Frenche, and French.

Some traces of the name appear as follows : —

Among the surnames of the chief noblemen and gentlemen who came into England with William the Conqueror, mentioned by Stow as well as Friar Brompton. A member of the French family, of Ireland, states, from his notes of the family, that “Sir Theophilus Ffrench (Freyn) accompanied William the Conqueror to England, and was present at the Battle of Hastings, deriving his pedigree from Sir Maximilian.”

D’Alton continues : “The particular ‘Freyn’ or ‘Freyne,’ or with the ordinary prefix ‘De la Freigne,’ who, according to Brompton, ‘attended the Conqueror,’ is stated, in old pedigrees, to have descended from

Rollo, the first Duke of Normandy, and their account is reiterated by modern genealogists.

“Those compilations of family pedigrees on which Hardiman relies as having been ‘collected at intervals from some time previous to the year 1500, down to that of 1671, by the family of O’Luinin,’ who are frequently styled throughout hereditary antiquaries of Ulster and of Ireland, and as being in his possession when he wrote, do distinctly, and with confirmatory authority of an English herald, deduce the descent of the individual under consideration from a Sir Maximilian de French, who was a son of Harloven, junior, son of Harloven, son of Rollo the Strong, alias Robert, first Duke of Normandy, as Sir Thomas Hawley, King of Arms in England, 28 Henry VIII, gives an account: ‘Rollo was baptized in 912, by the Archbishop of Rouen, taking the name of Robert, from the Count of Paris, who answered for him at baptismal font.’”

Among “persons entered in ‘Doomesday Book,’” completed in 1086, “as holding lands in the time of King Edward the Confessor, and through later years anterior to the formation of the survey,” will be found in several counties land owned by Frane, — to wit, in Lincoln, Nottingham, Sussex, Worcester, and York.

The statement from “the O’Luinin collection cited by Hardiman” seems more full than that of Burke. The former states “that Sir Herbert or Humphrey de Frayne married Arabella, daughter and heiress of Charles Harley, Knight, of Ormuch in Wales, and by

Fulco de Freyne was Seneschal in the County of Kilkenny (under Gilbert, Earl of Gloucester, who married the daughter of King Edward the First). In "1302, not less than three Royal Letters of Credence were directed to him, as one of the Fideles of Ireland, concerning the state of Scotland and the services required for the war there." His son Fulco, "and an Oliver De la Freyne, were in 1335 summoned, as Mag-nates of Ireland, to attend the King's wars in Scotland, and were present at the Battle of Hallidown."

From 1086 down, including the reign of King John, in many places is found the name of Fraxino, Freyne, Frein, and Frene; thence, toward the early part of the fourteenth century, it is to be found recorded in Derby, Salop, Suffolk, Bedford, Oxford, Essex, Wilts, etc., — more numerous, of these counties, in Salop, Suffolk, and Oxford; of these, Oxford had the greater number. Other counties are also mentioned later on. D'Alton says: —

"This cousin of the Conqueror, as he may be considered" (referring to Alfrin, a contemporary in Normandy with the Conqueror, a descendant from Sir Maximilian, and from whom descended the De Freyne, as I am led to believe, though Lodge states "derived the name," probably in the way of taking it from an inherited estate), "does not, however, seem to have renounced his country without leaving behind him some who have perpetuated there also the name and honors of the house, a few of whom may be here alluded to.

her had issue, five sons and two daughters, viz., Christopher, Walter, Patrick, Nicholas, John, Mary, and Julia French; that from Christopher and Walter are descended the family of Ffrench in England, and from Patrick and Nicholas those of Ireland. John, the fifth son of Sir Humphrey, is stated to have settled in Scotland, where he married Jane, a daughter of the Hon. James Lindsey, third brother of Thomas, Earl of Crawford, from whom are descended the family of Frenches in Scotland."

Information as regards the early history of the family is far from satisfactory, from the lack of records here; but it is very probable much valuable information can be obtained about this and other families from the Advocates' Library of Edinburgh, as well as other depositories. However, sufficient is known to indicate that individuals of this family went early to Scotland.

Adam French appears in connection with Scotland in 1335, and he, without doubt, is an ancestor of the French families of Thornydyke and Frenchland.

D'Alton "rather concludes, from the inferences of history and record, that the first who bore the name in Ireland was neither a Herbert nor a Humphrey, but a certain Fulco de Freyne, who is admittedly of the line," (this implies, as I understand, of the Herefordshire line), "and is the first who appears noticed in the Patent Rolls, in 1286, and then not in connection with Wexford, but — what will be found much to confirm this opinion — as Seneschal of Kilkenny."

‘Pierre du Fresnay, ecuyer,’ was a celebrated hero of France in the fourteenth century. Claud du Fresnes is mentioned by Anselm with distinction. Lainé, in his ‘Archives Genealogiques de France,’ notices ‘Seigneurs des Fresnes’ as long settled in Artois, and afterwards amongst the nobility of Champagne and Picardy; while Caurcelles, in his genealogical work, records, as existing in later years, the following ennobled individuals of the surnames ‘De la Fresnaye,’ Marquis de St. Aignan; du Fresne, Baron de Villiers; Fraine, Comte de la Villegentier, Baron, Pair de France,’ etc. Nor has the name in that country been less promising in the walks of literature. In the sixteenth century, Jean Vaquelin de la Fresnay was an eminent satiric poet; in the 17th century, Charles du Cange du Fresne was a laborious writer and profound scholar; Charles Riviere du Fresney was the author of many dramatic works at the close of the same century, and the enumeration might be considerably increased if requisite.

“In the establishment of Norman power in England, De la Freigne acquired a grant of land in Herefordshire” (as it does not appear in the ‘Doomesday Book,’ it must have been after the year 1086,) “where he established himself, and his line was continued for centuries. Accordingly, in the important survey taken, in the reign of Henry Third, of the Knight Fees in certain counties in England and their tenure, commonly styled the ‘Testa de Nevil,’ the heirs of Thos. De Freigne

were found seized, in 1277, of half a fee in 'Parva Covarne.' In that county, at the same period, Hugh de Freigne was seized of Sutton and Masham, half a fee in the same county, and, yet more, of half a fee in Moccas, also in that county, as recorded in the same survey. In further corroboration of their tenure here being, as alleged, of ancient grant, Walter de Freigne was certified, in 1166, as holding three Knights' Fees 'of his Barony in the county of Herefordshire;' while Alured De Freigne, a younger member of the house, was on the same occasion recorded as holding the third part of a Knight's Fee.

"The above Hugh of Moccas was evidently the descendant of Walter of 1166; and in 1277, after doing suit before the Earl Marshal at Worcester, his military service of forty days was by the king transferred to be performed in West Wales, under his Majesty's brother, Edmund, Earl of Lancaster; and in 1291 the same individual had a charter for free warren in his lands at Moccas and Sutton, in two years after which he had a royal license to castellate his manor-house at Moccas. The armorials assigned to him, in the Roll of Knights serving King Edward First in his wars, are described as 'de argent et de azure les bendes endentes.' In 1302, Gerard de Freigne was sent Ambassador to the court of Holland and Zealand. Another Sir Walter, probably a son of Sir Hugh, served in these wars with him; and, having married Alice, the heiress of Alexandre le Secular, about the year 1291 acquired with her



the manor of Marden, also in Herefordshire. In 1305, he was returned as Knight of the Shire for Hereford, at the Parliament of Carlisle, and immediately after obtained a royal order for his expenses in attending same. He was also returned Knight of the Shire to the Parliament of Northampton, in the year 1307; to that of London in 1311; to that of Westminster in 1313; and to the Great Council, convened by general proclamation, to be present at the latter place in 1324: while a William le Freigne, who was knighted in 1306, was returned Representative for Herefordshire in 1309. In 1316, the Lordship of Moccas was vested in a John, the son of Henry De Freigne, who in 1329 obtained the Royal License for holding a fair and market there.

“The memoir has thus long attached itself to Herefordshire, in belief that the line thus far illustrated may be considered common to all the numerous branches that subsequently diverted from it, as well in England as in Ireland ‘and Scotland,’ and that it was about this period that the migration took place which founded in ‘Ireland’ a sect of the highest influence and respectability, which has given a tribe to Galway, Parliamentary Representatives to every county in which they have settled, and has been in two instances ennobled in the Peerage.

“A few events, however, of more than family interest, connecting subsequently with the house of Moccas, may not be irrelevant, occurring, as they chiefly do, while the connection between the Irish settler and his

English ancestry was morally and politically maintained. In 1337 (10 Edward III) took place the celebrated tournament of Dunstable, where, on the roll of the knights who tilted there, appears the name of 'Monsieur Hugh De Freigne.' There is reason to believe he was a near relative of John of 1316 and 1329. In 1334, he had been appointed Seneschal of Cardigan for the term of his life; and was, in the year 1336, summoned to Parliament by express writ, as one of the Barons of the Realm. He it was who married Alice, daughter and heiress of Henry De Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, then a widow; and in her right he claimed and assumed the title of Earl of Lincoln. He at the same time obtained livery of the Castle of Buelt, in Wales, which had been granted to her former husband, Eubulo le Strange, a younger son of John, Baron Strange, of Knockyn. It having been, however, represented to King Edward that this Hugh had obtained his said lady by her abduction from the Castle of Bolingbroke" (probably owing to some court jealousy, with possibly a desire on part of the king to increase his possessions), "the royal indignation directed a seizure of all their lands, goods, and chattels, and a further order for their personal arrest; immediately after which, and most probably affected by his sovereign's displeasure, Hugh died, leaving no issue by her. In 1348, John Freyne, the son and heir of 'John Freigne,' became seized of Moccas, Marden, etc., as on his father's recent decease. At the last period, a Robert Frensh was

seized of other lands in Herefordshire, on whose decease in 1370 the custody of his estate was committed in wardship, 'durante minoritate heredis.'

"This record is one of the many that, even at this early date, evince the transition from Freyne to French. In 1376, Richard de Freigne was Lord of Sutton and Moccas, after which the records of their inheritance there cease; the Lordship of that fine residence having passed by a female to the Vaughans of Bridwardine, and from thence similarly to the Cornwalls, in whose right it is held by Sir Velters Cornwall, Baronet. It stands in a delightful situation on the southern bank of the Wye, within ten miles of Hereford. Other individuals of the name of Freyne (or French) are traceable by territorial and historic notices, — in Norfolk, from 1209; in Kent, from 1270; in Yorkshire, from 1276; in Sussex, from 1278; in Buckingham, from 1279; in Northamptonshire, from 1313; in Shropshire, from 1323; in Essex (where they gave name to the 'Manor of Franches'), from 1351; in Somersetshire, from 1360; in Dorsetshire, from 1399; in Berkshire, from 1422; in Worcestershire, from 1446; in Bedfordshire, from 1461; and in Oxfordshire, Devonshire, Cornwall, Surrey, and Somersetshire, from the time of Queen Elizabeth, as also in Scotland to the present time. There are also memorials extant of 'Frenches' at sundry periods in London, Bristol, Oxford, Cambridge, Exeter, and in Calais, to which this allusion is made only as an indication of the great and influential extent of which the name has branched."



# ARMS.

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On the arms of the seventeen families of French mentioned by Burke are quite a variety of armorial bearings, the dolphin and fleur-de-lis\* being most conspicuous, and the changes from these are doubtless somewhat owing to alliances with other families. Of the seventeen arms, eight have dolphins on escutcheons or as crests ; three have fleur-de-lis as crests or as part of the crest ; one has a fleur-de-lis as crest, as well as on the escutcheon ; while, on the latter, two have a lion rampant, two have a wolf, and two have boars' heads.

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\* The resemblance of the fleur-de-lis to the old-fashioned spear is readily recalled ; and, though there is a difference of opinion, a few writers have gone so far as to claim that this heraldic emblem represents a spear's head.























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